Handling of letters by India Post

†*113. SHRI KRISHAN LAL BALMIKI: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that handling of letters by India Post has been reduced to a half in the last five years while the country's courier business is growing at 25 per cent annually;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRI A. RAJA): (a) No, Sir. There has been a decline to the extent of 26% in the total mail traffic (Unregistered and Registered Mail) from the year 2003-04 to 2007-08. The tentative figures of 2008-09, however, reveal a reversal in the trend. No authentic information regarding the courier business growing at 25% annually is available with the Department.

(b) The details of the total mail traffic handled for the last five years from 2003-04 to 2007-08 and for 2008-09 is as under:—

Year	Total Mail Traffic Number of articles (in crore)	Decline in total mail traffic over previous year No. of articles (in crore)	Percentage of decline
2003-04	863.53	45.88	5.04%
2004-05	736.03	127.50	14.76%
2005-06	670.06	65.97	8.96%
2006-07	667.71	2.35	0.35%
2007-08	639.11	28.60	4.28%
2008-09	654.09*	+14.98*	+2.34%

*Tentative

(c) The decline in the mail traffic has been caused by the changing nature of mail from personal to business mail and the effect of new technologies like mobile telephones and e-mail and to a certain extent by mushrooming of courier companies.

Illegal immigrants in the US

*114. SHRI NAND KUMAR SAI: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Indians have the dubious distinction of being the fastest growing group of illegal immigrants in the US;

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.